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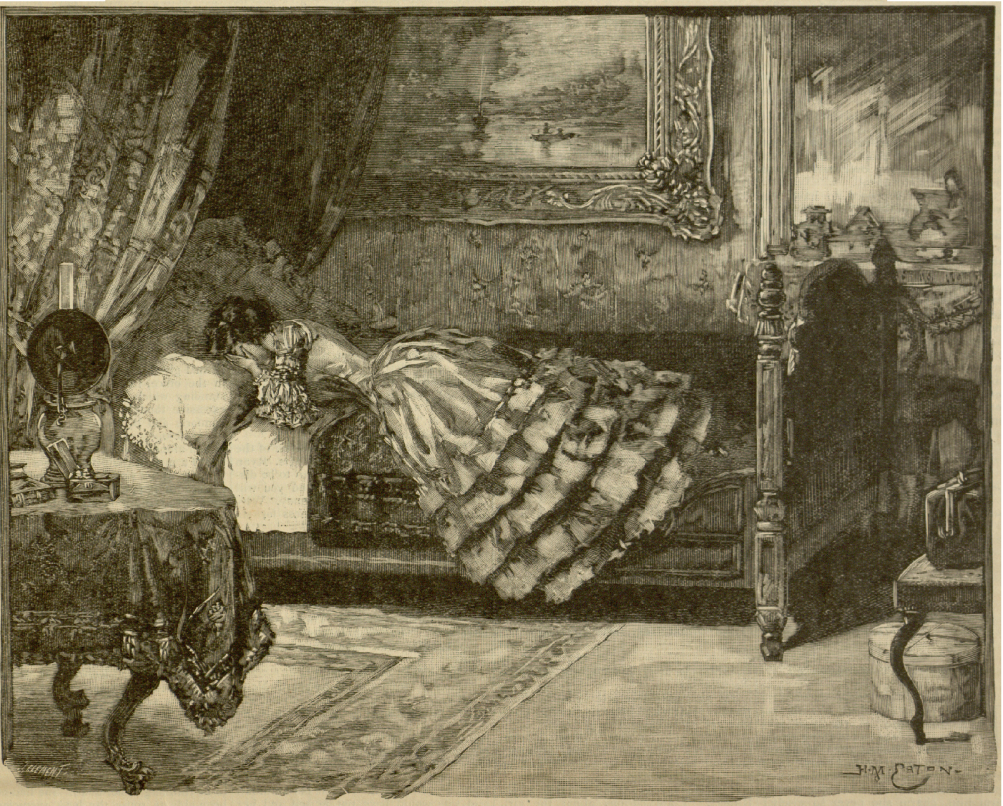
GERTRUDE HADDON.*

"ONLY A GIRL'S HEART."--Third Series.

BY MRS. E. D. E. N. SOUTHWORTH.



GERALDINE THREW HERSELF ON THE BED AND BURST INTO A TORRENT OF TEARS.

CHAPTER V.

"BOUND ON A VOYAGE OF AWFUL LENGTH."

"BOUND to San Francisco, by the way of Cape Horn!" echoed Gertrude, in a fainting voice, as she sank back in her chair, looking pale as death.

In an instant Captain Wailes saw the error he had committed, and hastened to rectify it.

"But we need not take *you* so far away from your home, my dear—I mean madam," he said, as he poured out a glass of water and handed it to her.

"Thanks. It is a very long voyage—a voyage of many months, is it not?" she inquired, as she rallied her strength, took the glass and drank the water.

"Yes, my dear child—I mean, my dear madam; but you are so infantile, you know. Yes, it is a very long voyage; but, as I said before, we need not take *you* so far, if you do not wish to go."

"Oh! I leave all my friends behind me! All I have in the world!" said Gertrude;

but she meant Gerald Fitzgerald, and no one else, for he was all the world to her.

"Well, we must try to send you back to them, by the first homeward-bound ship," said the captain, cheerfully.

"Oh, you *do* meet homeward-bound ships?" exclaimed Gertrude, flushing with renewed hope.

"Why, certainly we do! Lots of them! Heaps of them! Flocks of them! Droves of them!" cried the captain, exultingly, but with the flagrant exaggeration inspired by his wish to comfort and cheer his little passenger.

"Oh, I am so glad! And we may even meet one to-day?"

"We may indeed or," added the captain, who thought he had gone too far in promising so much, "we may not meet one for two or three days; no one can tell. So do not keep your attention on the *qui vive* of expectancy, but compose yourself, and, above all, eat your breakfast. You are eating nothing, my dear child—my dear madam, I should say! Pray, forgive me;

but I have a little girl at home, in old St. Mary's, who is just about your age, and I shall not think her marriageable for half a dozen years to come. How came you to marry so young?" inquired Captain Wailes, with a frankness which in *him* seemed perfectly natural.

"Because Colonel Fitzgerald asked me to do so," answered Gertrude, simply.

"Oh!" exclaimed the captain, with a little laugh, "and papa and mamma consented."

"I had no papa or mamma," Gertrude gravely explained.

"Ah," said the captain, in a more subdued manner, "but your guardians, little matron?"

"They had no power to prevent my marriage. It was especially stipulated in my grandfather's will that I might marry under age if I should wish to do so."

"And you did wish?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

"Because Colonel Fitzgerald asked me."

"Oh, but suppose any other eligible gentleman had asked you?"

"I should have been very sorry, for I

would never have married any one in the world except Colonel Fitzgerald," answered Gertrude, earnestly.

And then, all of a sudden, she blushed painfully. Indeed, any one less meek and gentle than Gertrude might have taken offense at these home questions of the plain, fatherly old sea-captain; but our little lady, besides her meekness and gentleness, possessed the charity that "is not puffed up," that "thinketh no evil."

The good captain, perceiving that he had embarrassed "the little matron," immediately changed the subject.

Meanwhile, the other passengers, who were seated around the breakfast-table, seemed to be too busily engaged in talking about the wreck with one another and with the ship's officers, to bestow the slightest attention on this little side conversation between Captain Wailes and Mrs. Fitzgerald.

When the company arose from the table, Captain Wailes gave his arm to Gertrude, to steady her steps as he took her on deck.

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"Do you prefer to sit here or would you rather go below?" he inquired.

"I will go to the cabin, if you please," answered Gertrude.

"I hope, my dear lady, that I have not been so unfortunate as to have given offense by the plainness of my questions. I fear you thought me very impertinent; but I really meant not to be so. I am a fatherly old fellow, with a daughter of my own at home, so you see how it was," said the good captain.

"Indeed, Captain Wailes, I think you are very kind to take so much interest in a stranger, and I should be silly as well as ungrateful to feel any offense," answered Gertrude, as soon as his silence gave her the opportunity of speaking.

"You are a good little lady. Now I hope you will let me know whether you require anything that the ship can provide for you," he said, as he handed her down the companion-way.

In the cabin Gertrude found a curious scene going on. It looked as if a dry-goods store had been opened there.

On the table lay whole pieces of cotton, linen and woolen goods, piles of Scotchplaid shawls, lamb's-wool hose and under-vests and cases of needles, thimbles, scissors and spool-cotton.

Around the table were gathered all the women in the cabin, examining and selecting from the goods.

"What is all this about?" inquired Gertrude of the good stewardess, who seemed to be the saleswoman of the concern, if it was a sale.

"While you ladies were at breakfast, these goods were brought up from the hold by the captain's orders. They are out of the captain's own share of the cargo, which is composed, as you may judge from these here specimens, of Manchester, Sheffield and Scotch goods," explained the stewardess.

"But what are they brought here for? We have no money to buy anything. Our money has all gone to the bottom in the *Zanzibar*," said Gertrude.

"Bless the child! The captain don't want anybody to buy anything. All this is a free offering to the shipwrecked ladies.

'God bless Captain Wailes and the *Becky!*' Captain Wailes knew the ladies would want more than one change of clothes, and the *Becky* had her hold full of all necessary goods. So the captain has had all this stuff got up for you, and even the scissors to cut 'em out and the needles and thread to make 'em up! It will be a rare amusement for you, too, ladies, on the long voyage."

"All this is very kind of the captain. Indeed, everything that he does is exceedingly kind and thoughtful. But it seems scarcely worth while to make up any clothes, when we expect to leave the ship so soon."

"*Eh?*" exclaimed the stewardess and the ladies in a chorus.

"I say it is scarcely worth while to avail ourselves of the captain's munificent liberality, for the few days or hours that we shall remain on the ship," repeated Gertrude.

"I don't know what you mean at all, young madam; but if I know anything about it, we shall be on this ship a good six months before we land," said the stewardess, while all the other women looked at the confident face of Gertrude with mingled astonishment, incredulity and—hope!

"I don't mean that we—that we shall land from this ship. I know, of course, that the voyage is a very long one; but the captain says that we may be transferred to the first homeward-bound one that we meet, if we wish to be sent home, as of course we all do," Gertrude explained.

"Oh, yes, of course," said the stewardess, indiscreetly; "but who knows how long it may be before we meet one. I think the ladies will do well to take the captain's offer, and make up one suit of underclothes apiece at least, if they want to be clean and comfortable."

"But the captain said we might meet a homeward-bound ship any day, any hour," pleaded Gertrude, clinging to her hope with the tenacity of desperation.

"So we may, any day or any hour. But, then, again, we mayn't, not this side of the Horn! So, I tell you, young lady, as you 'd better take this bolt of linen and cut you out a suit of underclothing; and I 'll fit you with a thimble and give you needle and thread to sew it up," persisted the stewardess, pushing a large roll of goods toward Gertrude.

But she had dropped down into a chair, overcome with sudden disappointment and dread. Had the good captain only "prophesied smooth things" that had no foundation in truth, when he told her that they would meet "droves" of homeward-bound ships? She could not tell. Instead of touching the bolt of linen or answering the stewardess, she asked a question.

"Is there, then, no certainty of our meeting a homeward-bound ship before we reach Cape Horn?"

"No, there is no certainty. There is *never* any certainty. But there is a chance; *always* a chance," replied the stewardess, oracularly.

"Well, in that case I will believe in the captain and hope for the ship," said Gertrude to herself, though her heart was very heavy.

Then, admitting the need she would have of additional clothing in case she should remain on the *Becky* even a week longer, she followed the advice of the stewardess and went to work with the other women.

There was not another individual among the wrecked party who was as much alone as Gertrude.

For even in the hurry of putting the passengers of the *Zanzibar* in the life-boats some attention was given to the expediency of keeping family parties together.

All on the boat Number 2, with Gertrude, were in complete parties, and had been so received on the *Becky*, although the limited accommodations of the ship necessitated the arrangement by which all the women and children were bestowed in the after cabin and all their husbands, fathers and other male relatives in the main cabin. But Gertrude had no one with her except her providential deliverer and escort, Sallust Rowley. And a delicate sense of propriety warned her that she must not make a companion of him, but, on the contrary, she must habitually avoid him as much as she possibly could do without discourtesy.

She felt that the plain spoken but kindhearted old sailor, Captain Wailes, was likely to be her best and safest friend at need; but she knew that she should see very little of him either, on account of his many duties, for he was an active commander and did not leave the conduct of his ship exclusively to his subordinate officers.

As for her fellow-voyagers in the ladies' cabin, they were absorbed in their own parties with their own troubles, and gave little thought or attention to any one or anything outside of their own little circle of grievances. And, lastly, the good stewardess had too many ladies and children on her hands to give much sympathy to any one individual.

So Gertrude was very much alone even in that crowded cabin.

But she did not cultivate her solitude and nurse it as a grievance. Her good heart going forth in kind thoughts and then kind acts toward all around her, soon created a sphere of love which embraced first the litttle children, then their mothers and then even the selfish and thoughtless within her influence.

She exerted herself to be useful and agreeable to her companions. When she had finished but one change of clothing for her own use, she made up one for the old lady whose sight was too impaired to enable her to sew for herself. When she had completed this task, she helped the mothers who had several children already suffering for clean clothes. Indeed, by the third day of wearing the little children's raiment was so much soiled and begrimed as to bring forth this exclamation from the stewardess:

“Well, I think it's a special providence that our cargo is all in dry-goods instead of tea and coffee and liquor and things, and that the captain had a share in it, too, else I don't know what would have become of these children!”

But Gertrude's nimble fingers helped the mothers so effectually that the children were soon cleanly clad in their new clothes, while their old clothes were taken off by the kind stewardess to be washed and mended.

Then Gertrude made a shirt for Sallust and sent it to him by the stewardess.

She thought—poor child!—that one change of clothing all around could be made to do, for she hoped from hour to hour and from day to day to meet that homeward-bound ship which was to carry them back “to old Virginia's shore.”

But when a week had passed away her heart so utterly failed and sickened that she felt she could be silent no longer.

She went on deck on the afternoon of the seventh day to look for the captain. She found him near the wheel.

"Oh, Captain Wailes," she said, "tell me truly—*please* tell me truly: *Is* there any hope of our meeting a homeward-bound ship?"

The good captain took his pipe from his mouth and turned and looked compassionately on her little pale, careworn face and pathetic brown eyes lifted so pleadingly to his, and he answered kindly:

"My dear child, I *do* tell you truly. Yes, certainly there is good hope of meeting a homeward-bound ship, or at least some ship by which you might reach home. For instance: If we were to meet a steamer or a sailing-vessel bound to London or to Havre, we could put you on her, and you could go to London or to Havre, or to any other port in Europe to which she might be first bound, and thence take ship to the United States and reach your home in three or four weeks.”

“Oh, how long, how long!” cried Gertrude, in a woe-begone voice.

“My child, are you so eager to get home that you cannot endure the unavoidable delay?”

“Oh, Captain Wailes, I know I ought to be patient, but I cannot! Oh, I cannot! Oh, if you *only* knew, if you only knew! My case is the worst case on board, Captain Wailes!” she moaned, wringing and twisting her little hands that had grown so pale and thin.

“My little daughter,” said the kind-hearted old sailor, “every one on the ship thinks his own or her own case the hardest to bear. That is very natural.”

“Oh, Captain Wailes, you don’t know, you don’t know!”

“Tell me, then, daughter, what is it that makes your case so much worse than that of all the others?” he inquired, sympathetically.

“Oh, sir, my husband believes me to be

"Oh, sir, my husband believes me to be dead, he believes me to be dead!"

"*Eh!*"

"He believes me to be dead, and he is grieving for me, and I cannot get near him to comfort him, or even get a chance to send him word that I am living. I am being carried farther and farther from him every day, and no one knows how far I am to go or how long I shall be parted from him, or what may happen in the interim," she said, in a voice of despair.

"You must not look on the darkest side, daughter. Of course he will hear of the wreck of the *Zanzibar* from some of those passengers in the other lifeboats that will have been picked up by other ships nearer home; but he need not, therefore, take it for granted that your boat was lost and believe you to be dead," said the captain, earnestly.

"Oh, sir, he believed me to be dead—he was *convinced* that I was dead before the *Zanzibar* ever sailed."

"*Eh!*"

"Indeed he did! And he had the very best reason for believing so. Have you not heard of the burning of the *Messenger* in Dover's Straits?"

"Of course I have. I have read all about it in the papers; I have read every man's statement—the captain's statement, and the first engineer's statement, and the steward's statement, and Lord Theobald Nugent, a passenger's, statement. I always read all about the shipwrecks and disasters at sea, daughter, because I can learn practical truths from them; just as doctors read up all remarkable cases in their line and lawyers in theirs. But what has the burning of the *Messenger* to do with *you?*"

"Did you read the list of the lost?"

"Yes, of course, conscientiously."

"Then you must know what the burning of the *Messenger* has to do with me."

"Indeed I do not."

"My name was in the list of the lost."

"*Eh!*"

"My name was in the list of the lost. Did you not see it!"

"My dear, I read over about two hundred names of the saved and the lost and saw not a name of any one I knew. So you see how difficult it is for me to remember among so many whether I saw the name of Fitzgerald or not. You were on board the *Messenger?*"

"Yes, I was; and I was reported lost."

"How was that, my daughter?"

"Listen, and I will tell you, Captain Wailes."

And she told him the story of the burning of the *Messenger* in Dover's Straits, and of the swamping of the women's lifeboat and of her rescue by Sallust Rowley. She did not tell him that she had been picked up first by her husband and abandoned by him, for she said to herself: "The captain will be sure to misunderstand it and to blame Gerald."

"My dear, I give in. Your case is the hardest case of all the shipwrecked party.

But you have faith and courage, daughter. Exercise them still. Hope for the coming of that homeward-bound ship," said Captain Wailes.

"But if it should not come?"

"At the worst, you would have to sail with me round Cape Horn and up the Pacific coast, and back again the same way. It would take about a year. But you have no idea how soon a year really passes! Young people never have. It will soon pass. Meanwhile, Colonel Fitzgerald is not suffering the anguish of suspense about you. And believe me, daughter, there is no other grief in this world so hard to bear as such a suspense would be, for there is no rest in it. It is a torture-rack that holds the spirit in agony. He is not subjected to that. He believes that you are in heaven, and his soul rests in that belief, however mournfully, but it rests."

Gertrude bowed her head, but made no reply.

"Now turn your mind to another view of the case. Do not look on the dark side exclusively. Do not think that every mile is taking you farther and farther from your husband, though that is true; but look to the end. Look on the bright side. Look to the end. Think how every day is bringing you nearer and nearer to the time of meeting, for this also is true."

"I will try to do so," murmured Gertrude, gently.

"And, meantime, trust in Providence. Pray for faith, hope and charity; for faith to sustain you under this trial; for hope to brighten future prospects, and for charity that will so go forth in good offices to those around you that you shall in a measure forget your own cares and troubles."

"I will do so, Captain Wailes," she meekly replied.

"And keep up your spirits and take care of your health, my little matron. You are looking pale and thin. You must take care of yourself for the good colonel's sake."

"Thanks, Captain Wailes. I will try to do so."

"And the time will pass more quickly then, and so bring around the day when you will meet your husband—when he will receive you as one risen from the dead. Imagine his joy! Is not that worth struggling and living for?"

"Oh, yes, indeed it is, Captain Wailes. And I will try to be strong and patient—yes, and helpful, too," said Gertrude, earnestly.

"And one last word now."

"Yes, captain."

"Remember that there is always a chance of meeting a homeward-bound ship. Let that hope cheer but not disturb you."

"I will try to govern my own spirit, Captain Wailes," she replied, as she left the deck.

The captain, when he next met Mr. Rowley, spoke to him about the burning of the *Messenger* and the rescue of Mrs. Fitzgerald.

And Sallust told him the whole truth, including the portion that Gertrude had loyally left out.

"What!" exclaimed the thunderstruck sailor. "Did this Fitzgerald leave his wife to perish while he rushed from her to rescue another woman? Was he mad or false?"

"That is the hardest conundrum I ever tried to guess. *She* says not. And she ought to know," replied Sallust.

After that, the story of Mrs. Fitzgerald's rescue from the sea on the night of the burning of the *Messenger* got bruited around among the ship's crew and passengers of the *Becky*; but it was told according to Gertrude's version, so that no blame was attached to Colonel Fitzgerald, though red-headed little Sallust Rowley was elevated into a hero, and Gertrude became an object of greater interest and affection than ever before among her fellow-passengers.

The second week of their voyage on the *Becky* passed, without a sign of a homeward-bound vessel to be seen.

Gertrude kept her promise to the good captain. She tried to be strong, patient and helpful.

Patient and helpful she could indeed be, without any effort at all, for to be patient and helpful was in her very nature; but she could not be strong.

The *Becky* was approaching the warmer latitudes; but the voyage seemed to grow more wearisome every week. The days were monotonous. Like John Hay's "engineers," they were "pretty much all alike."

Here is a specimen:

The cabin passengers rose at half-past seven o'clock. The captain, who was a good churchman, read prayers in the main cabin at eight. They had breakfast at half-past eight. After that, if the weather was fine, the ladies and children sat on deck, the children playing, the ladies knitting, sewing or reading some book from the captain's well-selected library; or, if the weather was foul, these avocations were pursued in the cabin.

Gertrude, who was an accomplished reader, sometimes read aloud while others knitted or sewed.

Often she made rag-dolls for the children and taught the little ones how to dress them.

And she helped to take care of the babies.

Yes, she was patient and helpful, but she was not strong.

As day after day and week after week passed without a sign of a homeward-bound ship, her heart grew sick with "hope deferred." She grew paler, thinner and weaker than before.

But we must leave her on her long voyage and return to Gerald and Geraldine.

CHAPTER VI.

"OLD COALS SOON KINDLE."

We left Doctor Goodwin and Miss Fitzgerald seated on the deck of the *Europa*, in the Cove of Cork, where the steamer lay at anchor, waiting for the Irish mail—with the last letters and passengers from London—the same mail that poor Gertrude had missed by just five minutes.

It was now late in the afternoon, and they had had luncheon, and returned to the deck to gaze upon the same beautiful scene by sunset which they had first beheld by sunrise.

Gerald, who had gone on shore in the morning had not yet come back.

The Irish mail arrived at six o'clock. With this mail and with the last passengers Gerald returned to the ship. He did not approach Geraldine, but went directly down to his stateroom.

Half an hour afterward the ship sailed.

Doctor Goodwin and Miss Fitzgerald remained seated on the deck, conversing in a low tone, and gazing on the beautiful shores of the "Green Isle," in the golden glory of the setting sun, and the silver radiance of the rising moon; for these two luminaries were on the verge of the horizon at the same moment; but the sun was setting behind the western hills of Ireland, and the moon was rising from the waves of the channel, in the east.

The two friends sat there until the last light of the sun had faded out of the west, and the rays of the moon were streaming down upon the sea.

Then Gerald Fitzgerald joined them, and stood leaning over the bulwarks, looking far out to sea.

Doctor Goodwin, on seeing his fellow-passenger approach, arose and said:

"Now, that the colonel has made his appearance to look after you, I will retire, my dear. I am rather susceptible of taking cold, and the night air on the sea at this season is rather keen."

"Oh, pray, take care of yourself, Doctor Goodwin! I had no idea that you felt the chill or I would not have permitted you to stay here so long," said Geraldine, quickly; and she thought that no experienced chaperon or maneuvering mamma could have acted with more tact and discretion than this same venerable old doctor of divinity.

But the truth is that Doctor Goodwin *was* afraid of the night air, and he had no other reason for leaving the deck. He bowed and withdrew.

"Gerald, here is a seat. Do sit down," said Geraldine, as soon as the old man was out of sight.

Colonel Fitzgerald turned, bowed and took the place she indicated.

"Gerald, what are you thinking about?" she inquired, with solicitude.

"I *beg* your pardon?" said Colonel Fitzgerald, interrogatively, as if he had not heard her.

"You are always dreaming, Gerald.

What are you dreaming of?" she earnestly inquired.

"Geraldine, there is always a scene before my mind's eye that I cannot banish if I would. No, nor however painful and even agonizing it may be to me, that I *would* banish if I could. It is the scene of my wife's death beneath the waves of that red sea lighted up by the flames of the burning ship," he sadly and sternly replied.

"Gerald, this is morbid. Think how many men—fifty men at the lowest computation—have lost wives or children or sisters or mothers by that woeful disaster. Suppose all of them should brood over their trouble as you do over yours?"

"Geraldine, fifty men—no, nor five men ever left their wives or mothers or children to perish as I left mine," he answered, in bitter sorrow.

"Oh, Gerald, Gerald, Gerald, my betrothed no longer, but my dearest friend and cousin still, you wrong yourself, you do indeed! You wrong yourself most cruelly! You did not leave her to perish! She was killed by an accident before my very eyes!

I saw her killed before I called out to you for help. It is an awful, horrible thing to tell you, and it was a more horrible thing to see, but I saw the back of her head crushed like an egg-shell by a blow from that plank you struck out of my hand! I saw that she was dead before I called for assistance! And I had a right to your assistance, Gerald, for you had inadvertently stricken my only support from under me, and I was drowning by your act."

"If I could only believe that, Geraldine, it might mitigate my remorse, though it could not soothe my sorrow," he answered.

"Do you then presume to doubt my word?"

"Most certainly I do not doubt your veracity; but I may doubt the evidence of your senses, as I should doubt that of my own," answered Colonel Fitzgerald.

"You are morbid, Gerald. Oh, that I could bring you to a healthier frame of mind!"

"Geraldine, do not trouble yourself with me. I am not worth your care," he answered moodily.

"Gerald, I know, of course, that all is over between us; that we never can be more than friends and cousins; but still we are too near kin, too dear friends, to make it possible for me to look upon your suffering and not suffer with you; to feel so helpless to help you and not—"

Here poor, proud Geraldine broke down and burst into tears. Nay, more, she dropped her head upon his shoulder and wept bitterly.

"Let me lead you to your stateroom, Geraldine; you would be better there," said Colonel Fitzgerald, rising and thus depriving her of support on his shoulder.

"Thanks, no, sir. I do not need assistance. I need self-recollection more, for I have forgotten myself I think," she answered haughtily, as she arose and walked off.

Colonel Fitzgerald followed her to the head of the companion-ladder and saw her down into the ladies' cabin in safety, and then he returned to his seat with distraction added to his sorrows.

"Poor girl! I shall be glad for her sake when this voyage is over," he said to himself; for it seemed to him then that the death of Gertrude had extinguished the last lingering spark of affection that he had left in his heart for Geraldine, and that he loved Gertrude in her ocean grave more than he had ever loved Geraldine in all the pride of her life and beauty. Was he mistaken in himself? Time will show.

As he sat there ruminating, a strange drowsiness stole over him. He resisted the sensation and roused himself several times, but always relapsed into slumber, until, in a very short time, he fell fast asleep. Then a strange thing happened to him. He had a dream, which was more like a vision than a dream.

He thought that he was still sitting on the after-deck of the *Europa*, gazing moodily out upon the moonlit sea, when softly glided to his side the form of Gertrude, his drowned wife.

"Gerald," she murmured, "I have been standing by your side so long trying to speak to you. Gerald, neither life nor death can separate those who truly love each other. I have come to you in this way, Gerald, as I can only come to you now, to pray you to save yourself and me;

to let no false pity nor policy nor any other motive tempt you to raise an impassable barrier between us. I am praying you to wait for me, Gerald. Wait for me! I am hastening to you in the—"

The vision vanished and the voice sank into silence before the sentence was completed, and Gerald Fitzgerald woke up to find that he had been dreaming.

Yet the dream impressed him as deeply and remained with him as long as if it had been a reality.

The sweet, pathetic face had seemed so natural; the gentle, tender voice so familiar.

"Oh, my dove-eyed darling! Oh, my lost angel! Shall I never see your meek brown eyes again—never hear your dulcet tones? No, no, no! I never, never shall, neither in this world nor in the world to come, for a gulf as wide as separated Dives from Lazarus must divide me from your pure and loving spirit!" he groaned within himself, as he left his seat and paced the deck in restlessness of soul.

He saw no more of Geraldine until he met her at the tea-table, attended by Doctor Goodwin.

She seemed then to have recovered her equanimity.

Their voyage across the Atlantic passed without any event, except the snow-storm that overtook them just as they were entering New York harbor. This was the same snow-storm in which the unfortunate captain of the *Zanzibar*, then on the Grand Bank of Newfoundland, lost his reckoning and ran upon the island of ice. But the *Europa*, being three days ahead of the *Zanzibar*, was safe in the harbor of New York when the full force of the storm broke.

The ship reached her pier about nine o'clock that night.

Colonel Fitzgerald, leaving Doctor Goodwin to look after Geraldine and to get their baggage through the custom-house, hastened to the railway station of the New York and Washington lines, to ascertain when the first train would leave for the South.

He was told that the last train for that night had just started and that there would not be another until six o'clock the next morning.

He went back to the steamer with this news, and then took his party to the old Astor House as the most convenient for their purposes.

"Now, of course, I shall have to hasten down to Virginia with all possible expedition. I must leave by the first morning train for Washington, which starts at six o'clock," said Colonel Fitzgerald, as he seated himself at the small supper-table with his party in their private parlor in the hotel. "But I need not hurry or inconvenience you or Miss Fitzgerald. If you or if Geraldine should prefer to stop in New York for a few days—"

"I thank you, Gerald," interrupted his cousin; "I prefer to go directly home."

"And so do I, Fitzgerald," added the good doctor. "The very same interest that takes you in such a hurry to Virginia takes me also. I am as anxious to hear the communication of the dying woman Magdala, or—what is her barbarous name?—Clea Phara, as you can be."

"Yes, but the woman declares that she will not divulge the secret to any one but me," objected Colonel Fitzgerald.

"And very properly, since she also declares that this secret affects the honor of the Fitzgeralds! But for all that, if it should seriously relate to the rights of property or the identity of the heiress, in that cause which you and I have had so much at heart, I think, Gerald, that the secret must be made public."

"Of course, of course, Doctor Goodwin. The ends of justice must be served at any cost of feeling. Yet remember that I have neither knowledge nor suspicion of what this woman's secret relates to. I often think it is nothing more than the hallucination of a diseased mind, or, rather, I often should think so if I did not remember how the hearing of it hastened my father's death. I know not what it can be. I confess to some considerable curiosity and impatience to meet this woman face to face and hear what she has got to tell me."

"If the question is a fair one, may I ask what you are both talking about?" inquired Miss Fitzgerald, who had been a silent auditor of the conversation.

"Yes, Geraldine, we are talking of that communication which the wandering maniac, whom we knew as Magdala, made to my father on his death-bed—"

"And which was said to have accelerated his death?"

"Yes; the woman Magdala, or rather the gipsy Clea Phara, is now on *her* death-bed, and wishes to make a clean breast of it to me."

"This secret which she has boasted, if given to the public, would pull down the 'unsoiled plume' of Fitzgerald to the dust?" inquired Geraldine, with a sorrowful smile.

"Yes, I suppose so!"

"I defy her or any one else to divulge anything which can do that! And I am amazed, Gerald, that you should be so credulous as to believe such a statement."

"Yet you and I know that there is one sealed page in our family history."

"You refer to Arthur Lloyd Fitzgerald, the son of your father's elder brother?"

"Yes, I refer to Arthur Lloyd Fitzgerald, my cousin."

"That romantic, quixotic boy, who had his head turned by reading piratical romances, and who ought to have been well flogged for his mad caper, instead of being so solemnly and terribly punished as he was. But what has his fate to do with the case under discussion?"

"It may have nothing to do with it; it may have everything. Remember that nothing has ever been heard of the lad since his reckless escape from the sloop-of-war *Samaria*, by jumping overboard at midnight."

"But he was supposed to have been drowned, then and there."

"Yes, *supposed*, but not ascertained to have been drowned. I confess that it seems to me that trouble can only come to the family through some circumstance connected with him."

"Did you ever know him, Gerald?"

"No; he was full fifteen years my senior. He was sent to sea at the age of fourteen, and at the age of seventeen entered into the mad conspiracy that ended in his ruin. It was a romantic boy's freak, nothing more; but it ruined him and brought his parents to the grave. Yes, my father inherited the Summit Manor through the domestic tragedy in his elder brother's family. And if the secret that the gipsy woman told Maurice Fitzgerald on his death-bed had anything to do with the fate of Arthur Lloyd, it is no wonder that in his weak state it hurried him into his grave, for he never could bear the least allusion to that misguided and unhappy youth."

"No. I know that my uncle could not endure to hear his name mentioned. His name—

> 'Was banished from each tongue and ear,
> Like words of wantonness and fear.'

But come! If we are to take the six o'clock morning train we must be up at half-past four. It will take us an hour and a half to take breakfast, get ready and reach the train. So I will bid you good night," said Geraldine, rising and leaving the room.

As soon as she had locked herself in, all the cool composure of her manner vanished.

Geraldine threw herself on the bed and burst into a torrent of tears, exclaiming passionately :

"How hard he is to me! How hard! How hard! How hard to me whom he used to love so madly! But he loves the memory of that girl in the bottom of the sea more than he ever loved me. Well, *she is* in the bottom of the sea, at least, and can never come back to trouble me again. And as for my Gerald, my betrothed, whom she took from me, I will win him yet! I will bring him to my feet! It may take time, but I will triumph!"

[TO BE CONTINUED IN OUR NEXT—NO. 35.]